UNITED
NATIONS

CRC

Convention on the
Rights of the Child

Distr.
GENERAL

CRC/C/SR.506
13 April 1999

ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH

COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Twentieth session

SUMMARY RECORD (PARTIAL) OF THE 506th MEETING*

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 11 January 1999, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Miss MASON

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* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting (closed).

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

OPENING OF THE SESSION

1. The CHAIRPERSON declared open the twentieth session of the Committee.

STATEMENT BY THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

2. Mrs. ROBINSON (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) wished the Committee every success in its work during the twentieth session and recalled that 1999 was the tenth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the tenth anniversary of the World Summit for Children, and the fiftieth anniversary of the Geneva Conventions. She earnestly hoped that efforts to achieve universal recognition and implementation of the rights of the child would redouble in 1999. Human rights, and children's rights in particular, should become an explicit objective for the twenty-first century, and should give rise to heightened awareness throughout the world.

3. Children always paid an inordinately high price during periods of armed conflict; in that regard, she commended the Committee for its decision to hold a meeting with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the impact of armed conflict on children. Plans had also been made for the Security Council to hold a public debate in June 1999 on the matter of children in armed conflicts.

4. She praised the Committee for its various activities and commended UNICEF for its efforts to implement the Convention; she wished to pay her particular respects to Miss Mason, who had been a member of the Committee since its inception, and its Chairperson since 1997. She assured the Committee that it enjoyed her personal support, and promised to do her utmost to mobilize the resources it needed to carry out its task properly.

5. To commemorate the anniversary year, she was working on a project for a workshop which could perhaps be held during the twenty-eighth session, and which would have the following theme: "The Convention on the Rights of the Child: Ten years of achievements and challenges." Her discussions with the members of the Committee in preparation for that workshop were sure to prove very fruitful. She was also contemplating the publication of a text which would discuss legislative aspects of the history of the Convention.

6. Finally, she called on all persons involved in the implementation and monitoring of the principles and provisions of the Convention to come up with creative ideas for events and projects on behalf of children to commemorate the anniversary year. The year 1999 would also mark a turning point if the draft ILO Convention aimed at prohibiting the worst forms of child labour was adopted.

7. The CHAIRPERSON invited the members of the Committee to make comments.

8. Mr. KOLOSOV said it was important to note that the formulation and adoption of a draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, with regard to the involvement of children in armed conflicts, fell within the competence of the States parties to the Convention and not within

that of the Working Group of the Commission on Human Rights constituted for that purpose. He hoped that matter would be taken up at the meeting of States parties to the Convention to be held on 16 February 1999, so that the procedures could be revised accordingly.

9. Mrs. ROBINSON (High Commissioner for Human Rights) said that she was well aware of the importance of that matter, and informed the Committee that the Deputy High Commissioner was scheduled to meet representatives of the Working Group to discuss that subject. For her part, she would do her utmost to ensure that the work of formulating the optional protocol would be carried through to a successful conclusion as promptly as possible.

10. Mr. KOLOSOV said that the International Herald Tribune had recently reported that certain countries intended to use young boys as human mine detectors, heightening his sense of alarm.

11. Mrs. ROBINSON (High Commissioner for Human Rights) assured the Committee that she would not fail to broach that grave matter with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the impact of armed conflict on children.

12. The CHAIRPERSON thanked Mrs. Robinson for her good wishes for the success of the Committee's work. She sincerely hoped that the drafting of the optional protocol would be completed within the year. For its part, the Committee would, as usual, strive to ensure that States parties fulfilled their obligations under the Convention. In that regard, Barbados would unfortunately be unable to present its initial report to the Committee on the date scheduled because national elections were to be held the same day. The consideration of its report would therefore be deferred to the next session.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (item 1 of the provisional agenda) (CRC/C/81)

13. The agenda was adopted.

SUBMISSION OF REPORTS BY STATES PARTIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLE 44 OF THE CONVENTION (agenda item 3)

14. Mr. DAVID (Secretary of the Committee) said that, since its previous session, the Committee had received the initial reports of Liechtenstein, Saudi Arabia, Palau, Latvia and the Dominican Republic and the second periodic reports of Guatemala, Ethiopia, Portugal, Paraguay and Lebanon, bringing the number of initial reports received to a total of 131, and the number of second periodic reports received to 20. Ninety-three reports had been considered; 51 initial reports and 87 periodic reports were overdue.

The part of the meeting covered in the summary record ended at 10.50 a.m.